

AMENDMENTS TO THE DRAWINGS

The attached "Annotated Sheets" of drawings include(s) changes to Figures 1-3.

Attachment: Annotated Sheets Showing Changes

REMARKS

Reconsideration of this application is respectfully requested in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks.

1. Drawings

Attached are photocopies of the drawings with proposed labels for the various functional blocks handwritten thereon. Favorable consideration of these proposed labels is respectfully solicited.

2. Claim Rejections

Independent Claims 15 and 16 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Klattenhoff (U.S. 6,507,468). In addition, independent Claim 1 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Klattenhoff. Remaining dependent Claims 2-14 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Klattenhoff in view of Lehner (U.S. 5,777,834).

The present invention is directed to a safety switching module for safely switching off an electrical load. As discussed on page 4 of the present application, in addition to the first current path having two switching elements for supplying current to the load, which current path may be switched off by both switching elements, a second current path is provided in parallel, having two further switching elements. In normal operation, the load is energized via both current paths. During a test cycle, the switching-off ability of one of the current paths is tested while the other current path then

takes over the electrical supply solely. It is therefore possible to carry out a test of the switching off ability by briefly switching off the switching elements and back-reading out output signals of these switching elements without impeding the supply of the electrical load.

One of the main aspects of the present invention is that both current paths are provided for supplying the load, meaning that both current paths are active during normal operation. Particularly in cases where large currents are necessary to energize the load, the present invention is advantageous since the large current is divided between two current paths. Hence, the switches used in the current paths may be dimensioned smaller.

In contrast thereto, the cited prior art document Klattenhoff uses one current path during normal operation. The second path comprising the shunt lines 11, 12, 13, 14 and the test relays 15, 16 is used only during the test mode. Hence, during the test mode one of both safety relays 9, 10 always lies in the active current path. Therefore, both safety relays 9, 10 have to be designed to conduct the entire load current (and not just for a very short time period as in the present invention).


Moreover, the additionally cited reference to Lehner does not obviate this deficiency in Klattenhoff.

Independent Claims 1, 15 and 16 have been amended by Applicants to emphasize this fundamental distinction between the present invention and the cited art. Thus, Claims 15 and 16 are clearly not anticipated by (nor obvious over) the Klattenhoff reference. In addition, Claim 1 is also believed to define patentable subject matter in view of Klattenhoff. Newly presented Claim 17 is believed to be allowable for similar reasons.

Accordingly, the present application is believed to be in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration is respectfully solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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